

Summer 2017

Philippians 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Reflection

Philippians must be one of the most uplifting books in the New Testament. Just listen to these verses from Philippians 4:4–7, Paul’s writing from prison, but you’d never know it,

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Our verse today sits amidst the passage we just read, Philippians 4:6,

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Don't be anxious. Rejoice! (v. 4) Why? How? The Lord is near (v. 5). It all sounds very upbeat and Paul's circumstances as he writes these words in prison show that he, for one, is able to practice what he preaches; but many people struggle with anxiety and are beset with worries. So what are we to make of these verses?

I don't think Paul is talking about clinical anxiety. And he certainly isn't talking about living a careless, carefree or uncaring life. The life of a Christian is quite the opposite. Here Paul is talking about living a life that isn't characterised by worry but by trust, a life that is not anxious about anything because everything is left and entrusted to God's hands.

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

But Paul offers us more. He offers us the antidote to worry, he offers us the salve and the solution to our worries, fears and anxiety. The antidote to worry is prayer.

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Is your life characterised by worries and fears and anxiety? If so Paul would ask you about your prayer life. Are you taking everything to God in prayer? Are you laying it all at his feet? As we read earlier, the

very next verse of Scripture promises that the result of praying through your worries and anxieties is a peace that transcends all understanding, a peace that will guard your heart and mind against these worries in the future.

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

What are you worrying about? What fears, great and small, are gnawing away at you? Is there always an undercurrent of worry or nervousness or unease in your life

that is draining your joy? If so, then this verse is for you. God is imploring you this morning through his words in Phil 4:6 to take back your joy and to experience his peace. How? In every situation – night, day, throughout the day and every day – by prayer and petition, present your requests to God. And receive his peace. Could it be, as James says in James 4,

‘You do not have because you do not ask God’?

Now I don’t want to oversimplify what for some may be a serious problem of a clinical nature. In God’s infinite grace, one of the blessings of our age is a medical profession so skilled at helping us through problems like these. If your anxiety is deep and unrelenting God would have you take

every advantage of his gracious provision in this area. But whether your worries are mild and passing, or hang over you like a dark cloud most days, God would have you pray to him about them, and in this passage he promises to help.

Think & Pray

As you think about these words of Scripture today take the time to identify your fears and worries. Bring them into the light of day. And pray about them. Give them over to the Lord. Entrust him with them. Petition him about them. Continually present them before him and ask to receive his peace. Open your heart to him so that he might guard it. And do so with thanksgiving and joy for promises like these:

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.